

CALWORKS CHILDREN IN THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES



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PREFACE

This report was written to inform policymakers and stakeholders about CalWORKs children in the County of Los Angeles. The descriptive research conducted for this study is a product of DPSS' concern for the well-being of children in CalWORKs families. The report attempts to lay the groundwork for further research that will inform policymaking designed to improve the way CalWORKs serves its child population.

Our preliminary analysis of how the CalWORKs aided population has changed in the wake of welfare reform is particularly noteworthy. When the Welfare-to-Work Act was implemented in the State of California in 1998, efforts were made to ensure that the new law would not be injurious to children. For this reason, programmatic features of welfare reform in California, such as sanctions for noncompliance and five-year time limits, do not affect the child portion of CalWORKs cash grants. Children continue to receive cash aid even if their parents reach time limits or are sanctioned. The consequence of this has been quite significant. As sanctions have increased and parents have reached time limits over the last few years, CalWORKs has evolved increasingly into an aid program for children. As of March 2005, less than two-fifths of CalWORKs cases in the County of Los Angeles were cases in which adults received cash aid. The majority of cases are ones in which parents are unaided while their children receive assistance.

Insofar as CalWORKs is increasingly an aid program for children, a report such as this one becomes all the more important. Identifying areas within CalWORKs where policy enhancements are necessary requires an enriched understanding of the program's child population. This report makes a contribution towards this end. In the pages that follow, the demographic and background characteristics of CalWORKs children in the County of Los Angeles are identified. Moreover, descriptive analysis of statistical data is provided and reveals the child population in CalWORKs as one with diverse program characteristics. In addition, issues affecting the long-term well-being of CalWORKs children - such as school drop-out rates, teen pregnancy, child abuse, and health insurance coverage - are examined. This valuable information will be an important asset in the hands of policymakers as they consider how to actively respond to the changing nature of the aided population.

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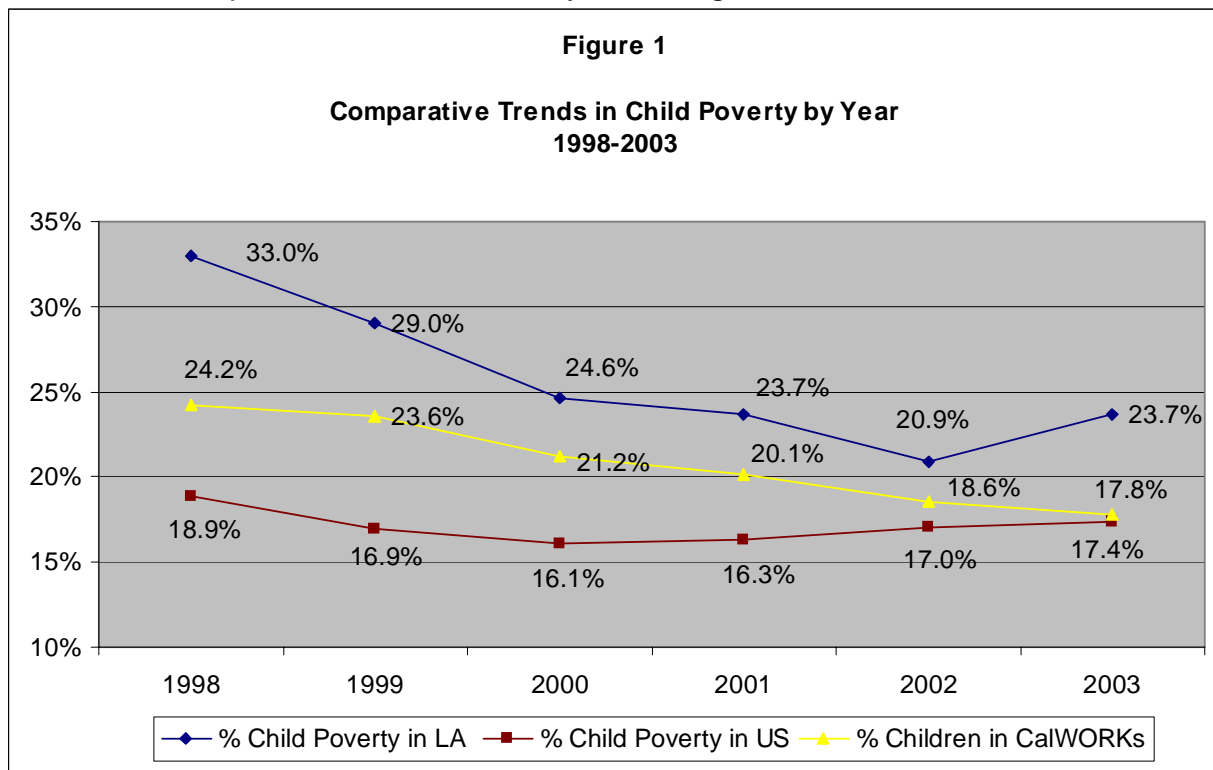
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I. Introduction

The Welfare-to-Work Act of 1997 (AB 1542) created the California Work and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. In passing AB 1542, the California State Legislature emphasized the importance of implementing welfare reform in a way that would benefit children growing up in welfare families. Policymakers sought to create new programs and support services for CalWORKs families that would help reduce child poverty and would not result in unanticipated outcomes negatively affecting the well-being of children in the state.

This report provides information on CalWORKs children in the County of Los Angeles for 2003 and is divided into three general sections: 1) A Profile of CalWORKs Children in the County of Los Angeles, which provides descriptive demographic and background information for 2003; 2) Program Characteristics, in which data on the program experiences of CalWORKs children is examined; and 3) Issues Shaping the Long-Term Well-Being of CalWORKs Children, which looks at data on teen births, school drop out rates, child abuse, and health insurance coverage.¹

A useful point of departure in looking at CalWORKs children in the County of Los Angeles is to note that approximately 661,300 children, nearly one-quarter of the County's child population, lived in poverty in 2003 (see Figure 1). Even though some CalWORKs families do not live in poverty, the majority of them have household incomes below the Federal Poverty Threshold. The study of CalWORKs children, therefore, provides important feedback on the characteristics and circumstances of poor children in the County of Los Angeles.²



Source: Poverty Estimates for the County of Los Angeles were generated by Walter R. McDonald and Associates, Inc., Sacramento, CA. Child poverty rates in the US is derived from the US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys, March 1998-2003. Percent of children in CalWORKs are derived from: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting System (LEADER), Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 1998-2003.

For these reasons, the analysis of the County's CalWORKs children offered in this report has far-reaching implications. A good portion of this analysis will be relevant to a general audience interested in child welfare issues and in the potential for improving the lives of poor children in the County of Los Angeles. At the same time, policy administrators and stakeholders can use the findings as the basis for the implementation of measures designed to improve the way CalWORKs serves children.

II. A Profile of CalWORKs Children in the County of Los Angeles

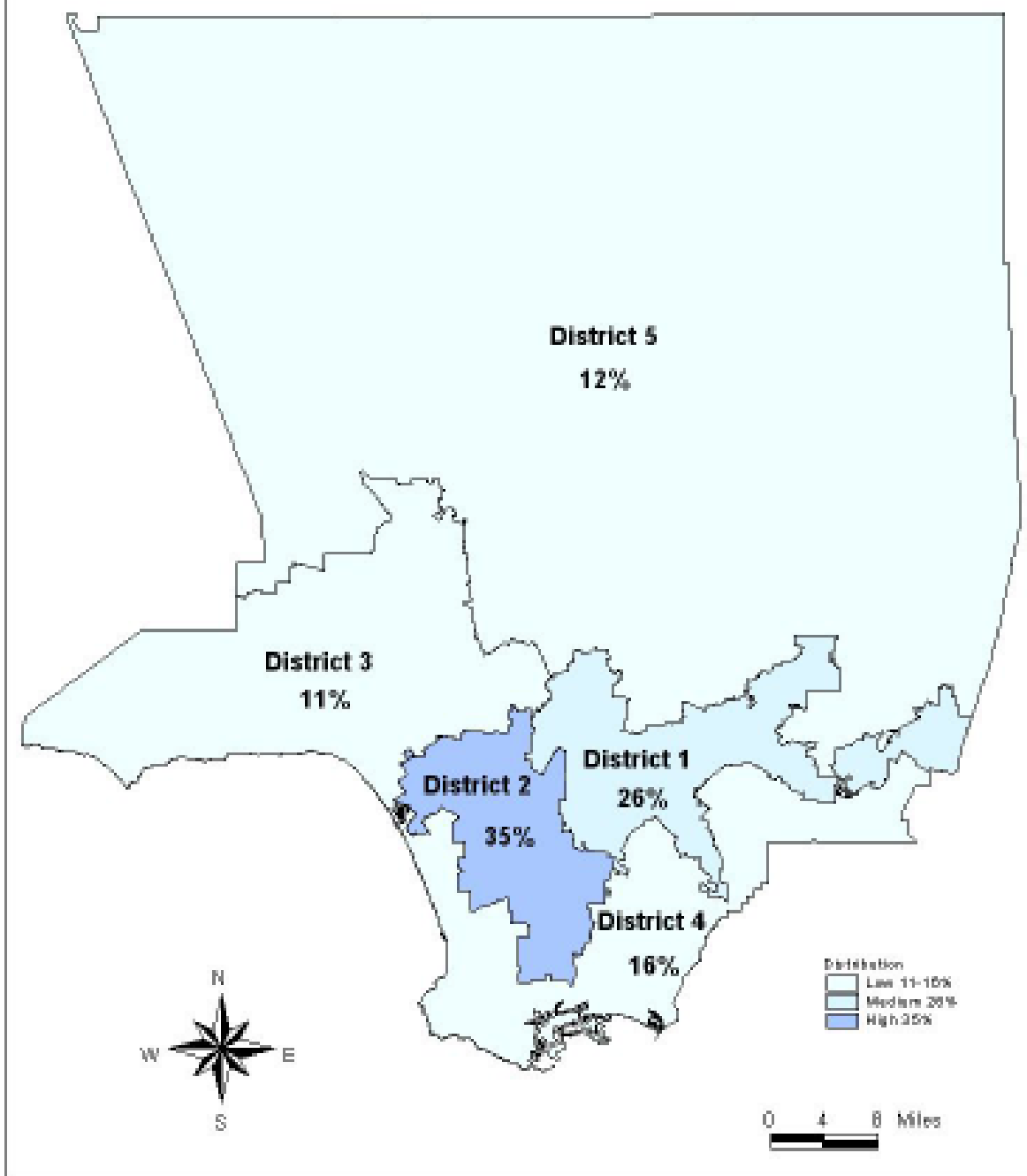
In 2003, of the 750,000 people in families that received CalWORKs in the County of Los Angeles at any time that year, 496,000 (two-thirds) were children.³ The section that follows begins by looking at the geographic distribution of the County's CalWORKs children and then examines the background and demographic characteristics of these children. Unless otherwise indicated, all figures reported in this study are for 2003. This was done for reasons of data availability and so that the numbers given here would be uniformly reported for the same year.

More Than Three-Fifths of CalWORKs Children are Located in Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2

Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of CalWORKs children in the County of Los Angeles by Supervisorial District. More than 60 percent of these children are located in Districts 1 and 2 (close to 26 percent in District 1 and 35 percent in District 2). Close to 11 percent of these children are located in District 3, 16 percent are located in District 4, and close to 12 percent are located in District 5.

Figure 2

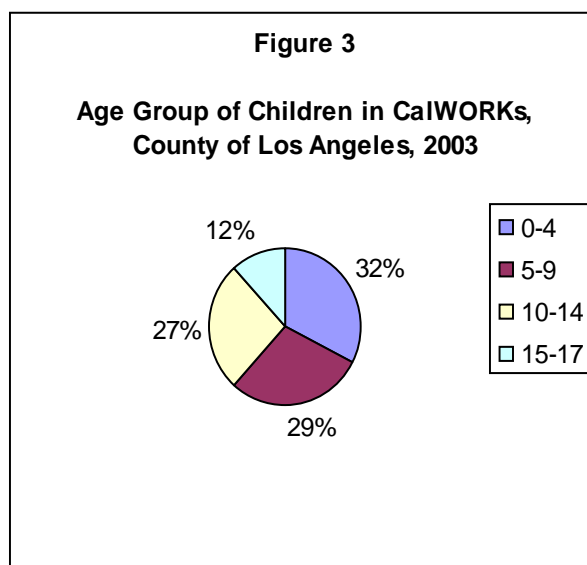
**The Percentage of CaWORKs Children in the
County of Los Angeles by Supervisorial District, 2003**



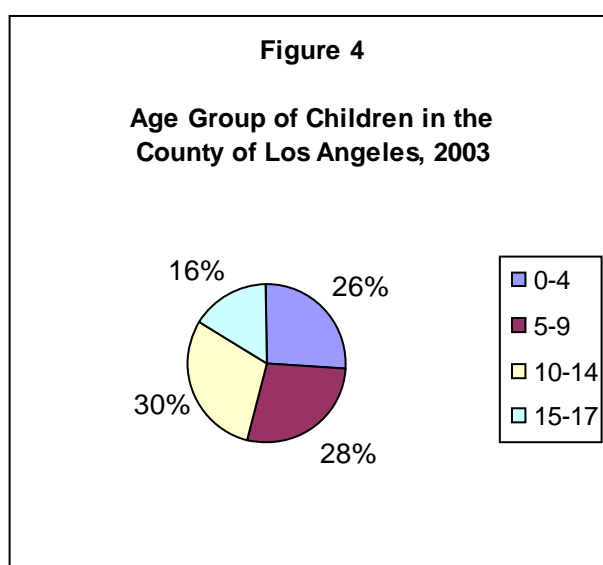
Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER).
Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 2003.

CalWORKs Children Tend to be Younger Than Children in the County as a Whole

Figure 3 provides the distribution of the County's CalWORKs children by age group, and Figure 4 gives the equivalent distribution for the County's child population as a whole.⁴ Almost one-third of CalWORKs children were between 0 and 4 years of age in 2003, as compared to 26 percent in this age group for the County as a whole. In both populations, roughly the same proportions of children were between 5 and 9 years of age (29 percent in CalWORKs versus 28 percent in the County as a whole). While just over one-quarter of CalWORKs children were between 10 and 14 years of age, 30 percent of children were in this age group for the County as a whole. Moreover, 12 percent of CalWORKs children were between 15 and 17 years of age, versus 16 percent in this age group for the County as a whole. The data therefore generally show that CalWORKs children are younger relative to the County's children overall. One reason for this may be that CalWORKs parents have children at a younger age by comparison with parents in the County as a whole. At the same time, it should be noted that the average age for both CalWORKs children and children in the County as a whole is 8 years of age.



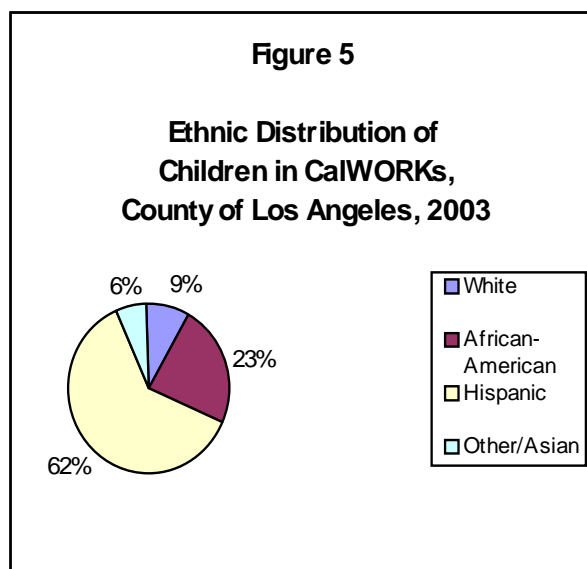
Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, County of Los Angeles, 2003.



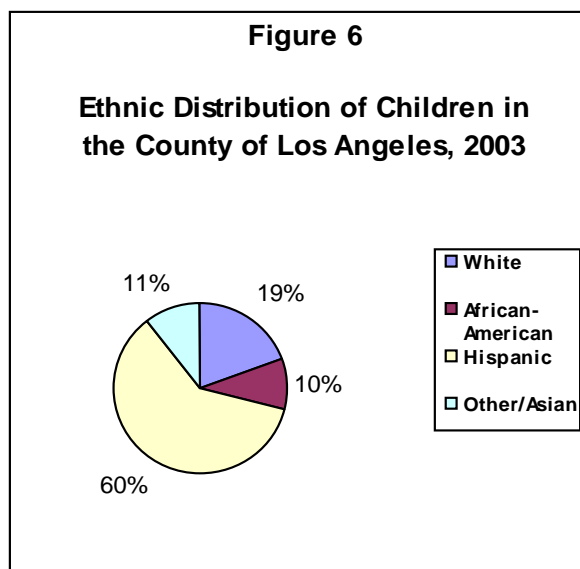
Source: 2003 Demographic Estimates were generated by Walter R. McDonald and Associates, Inc. Sacramento, CA.

The Majority of Children in both CalWORKs and the County as a Whole are Hispanic

As shown in Figure 5, slightly more than three-fifths (62 percent) of the CalWORKs child population in 2003 was Hispanic, while almost one-quarter (23 percent) was African-American, 9 percent was White, and 6 percent was Other/Asian. Figure 6, which provides the ethnic distribution for the child population as a whole in the County of Los Angeles, shows that 60 percent of the County's child population was Hispanic in 2003, 19 percent was White, 11 percent was Other/Asian, and 10 percent was African-American.⁵



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, County of Los Angeles, 2003.

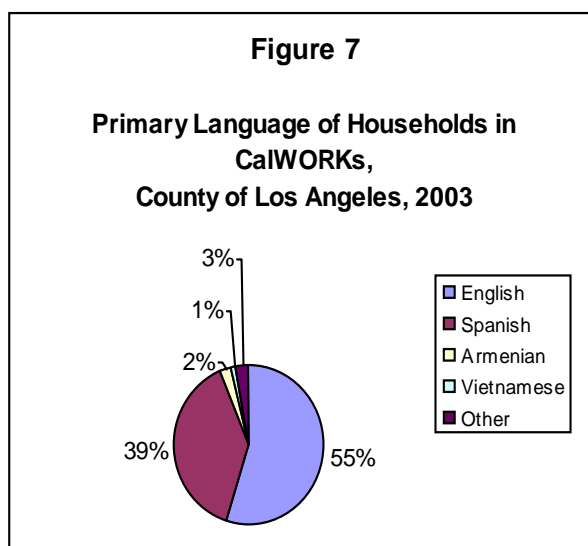


Source: 2003 Demographic Estimates were generated, by Walter R. McDonald and Associates, Inc. Sacramento, CA.

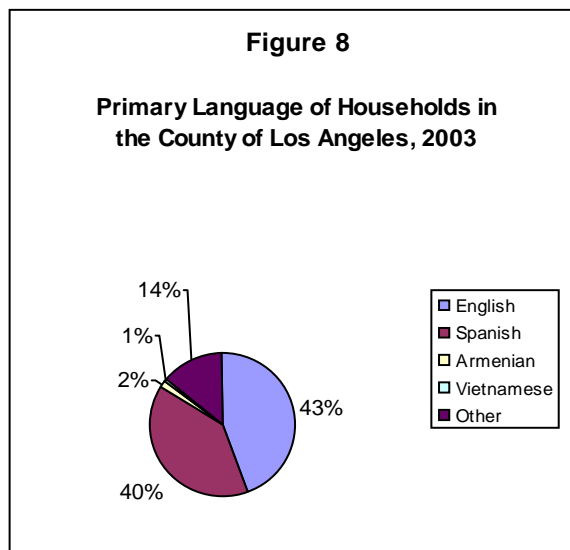
English is the Primary Language in More Than Half of CalWORKs Households

The demographic contours of the CalWORKs child population are brought into sharper focus in comparing the distribution of primary languages spoken in CalWORKs households with the language distribution for the County of Los Angeles as a whole. Figure 7 indicates that English was the primary language spoken in 55 percent of CalWORKs households in 2003, while Spanish was spoken in 39 percent of these households. Vietnamese, Armenian, and “Other” languages (i.e. Cambodian, Cantonese, Farsi, Russian, Mandarin, etc.) were spoken in the remaining six percent of these CalWORKs households.

By comparison, 43 percent of households in the County as a whole spoke English as their primary language in 2003, 40 percent spoke Spanish, 14 percent spoke “Other” languages, two percent spoke Armenian, and one percent spoke Vietnamese (See Figure 8).



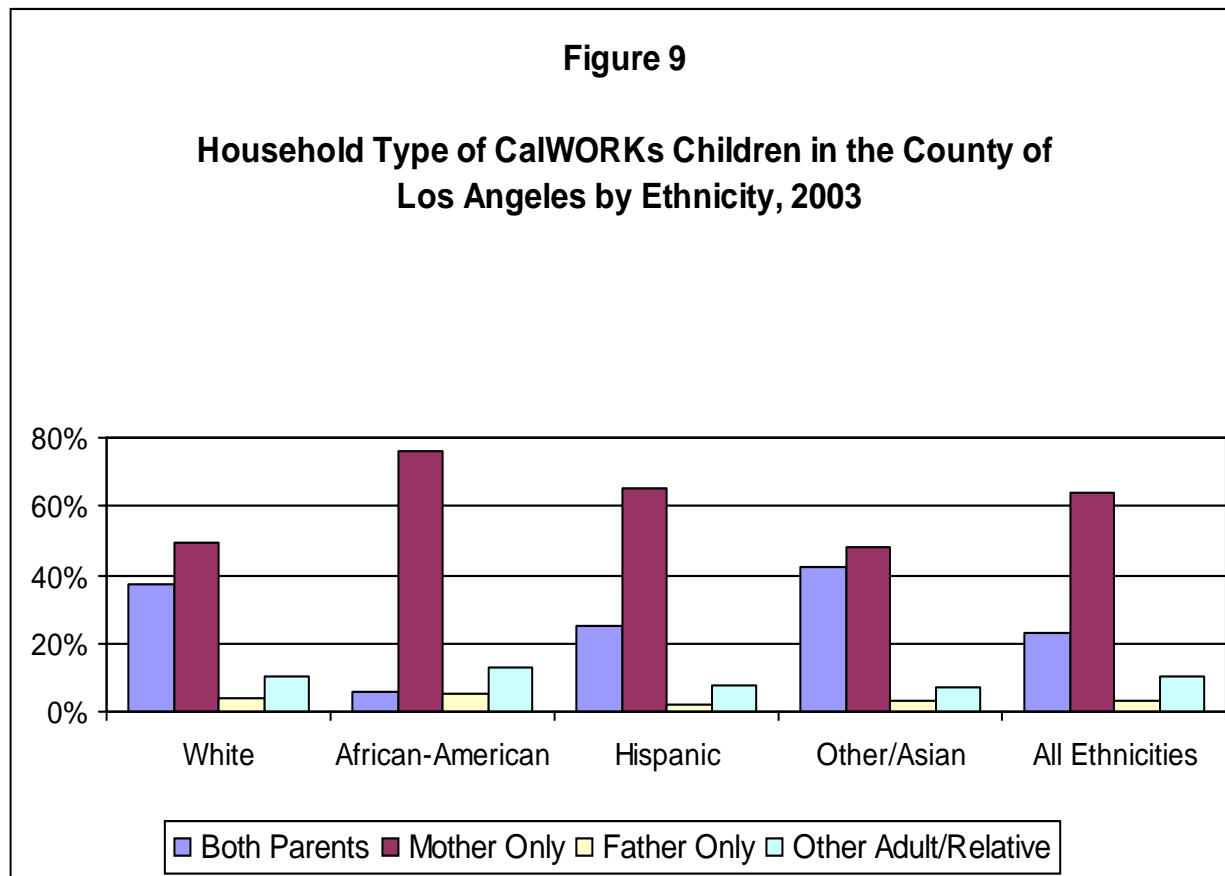
Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, County of Los Angeles, 2003.



Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2003.

A Majority of CalWORKs Children Live in Single-Parent Households

Figure 9 shows the breakdown of CalWORKs children by household type, both by separate ethnicity and for all ethnicities combined. For all ethnicities combined, more than five-eighths (64 percent) of the CalWORKs child population lived in single-parent households headed by mothers. More than one-fifth (23 percent) of the CalWORKs child population lived with both parents, and the balance lived either with an adult/relative other than a parent (10 percent), or in single-parent households headed by fathers (3 percent).



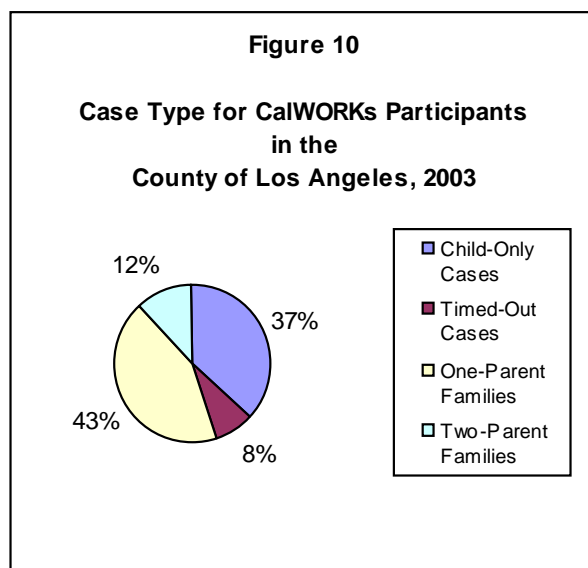
Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, County of Los Angeles, 2003.

Case Type

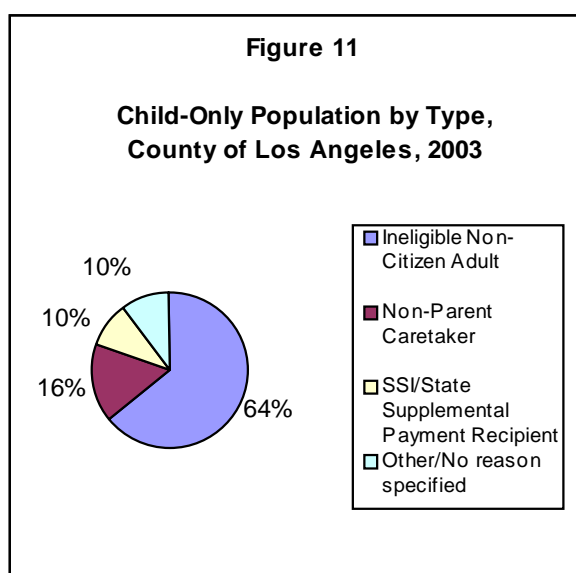
Figure 10 indicates that single-parent families comprised 43 percent of the County's CalWORKs cases in 2003, compared with the 12 percent of CalWORKs cases that were two-parent families. Child-only cases (37 percent), which are cases in which one or more children in a family are aided while the parents are not, and cases in which aided adults reached CalWORKs time limits for cash assistance (8 percent), comprised the balance.⁶

Child-Only Cases: CalWORKs Has Increasingly Evolved into an Aid Program for Children

In California generally and the County of Los Angeles in particular, child-only cases are comprised predominantly of children who are citizens while their parents are undocumented residents. Figure 11 shows that, within the population of child-only cases in the County of Los Angeles during 2003, while almost two-thirds (64 percent) were cases involving non-citizen adults, 16 percent involved non-parent caretakers, 10 percent involved Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment recipients, and an additional 10 percent were child-only cases for other reasons that frequently were not specified.



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER).
Department of Public Social Services,
Los Angeles County, 2003.



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER).
Department of Public Social Services,
Los Angeles County, 2003.

A closer examination of child-only cases data reveals that the CalWORKs program is increasingly becoming an aid program for children, as opposed to an aid program for Welfare-to-Work parents. In April 2002, 45 percent of CalWORKs cases in the County of Los Angeles were child-only cases. Because this is a monthly snapshot, and unlike the 2003 annual figure that is given for child-only cases above, the April 2002 figure includes sanctioned cases. However, April 2002 was eight months before participants began to reach five-year time limits on the adult portion of CalWORKs cash aid. By March 2005, at which time participants had been reaching time limits for more than two years, 63 percent of CalWORKs cases received only the child portion of cash aid (9.8 percent were timed-out cases, 13.4 percent were sanctioned cases, and 39.8 percent were other child-only cases). Consequently, only 37 percent of CalWORKs cases received the adult portion of CalWORKs cash aid in March 2005. The CalWORKs program's increasing evolution into an aid program for children is therefore largely an effect of time limits and an upward trend in both the absolute number and proportion of sanctioned families.⁷

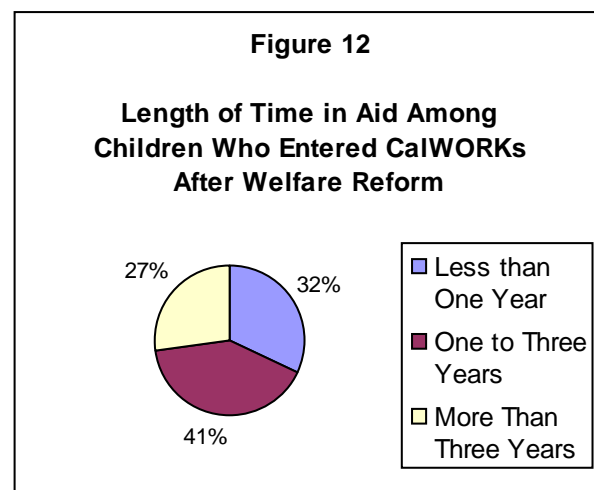
III. Program Characteristics

Just as the demographic and background characteristics of the County of Los Angeles' CalWORKs child population are quite diverse, their "program characteristics" are quite varied as well.

Almost Half of the County's CalWORKs Children in 2003 Had Cases Dating Back to the Pre-Welfare-Reform Era

In looking at the welfare population as a whole or any segment of the welfare population, whether it be adults, children, or other sub-

groups, one of the important internal distinctions to be made is between participants who entered welfare before and after Los Angeles County implemented AB 1542 in January 1998. Recent research has shown significant demographic differences between pre-reform and post-reform entrants.⁸ These differences are outside the purview of this study. However, it is important to note that almost half (48 percent) of the County of Los Angeles' CalWORKs child population in 2003 had cases dating back to the pre-reform era. For the remaining children whose cases only dated in the post-reform era, the average time in aid was two years.⁹ The child-only cases among these post-reform entrants of children had slightly longer welfare tenures, averaging 28 months in aid, as opposed to 23 months for cases in which the parents and children are aided. Overall, while 32 percent of the post-reform children in the County of Los Angeles were in welfare for one year or less, 41 percent were in welfare for between one and three years, and 27 percent were in welfare for over three years (See Figure 12).¹⁰



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, County of Los Angeles, 2003.

Utilization of Child Care

More than one-fifth of CalWORKs parents in single-parent families used CalWORKs child care services in 2003. By contrast, only 10 percent of parents in two-parent families used child care services. For families with children under six years of age, 30 percent of single-parent families and 16 percent of two-parent families used child care services.

Rules, Penalties and CalWORKs Families

The well-being of CalWORKs children is partly dependent on the program regulations their parents are expected to follow and the penalties their parents face for failure to abide by these rules. For example, parents who have additional children after they are already on welfare in California are subject to a family cap policy that renders these additional children ineligible for aid. In addition, the issue of whether or not parents are subject to Welfare-to-Work requirements is an important factor shaping the day-to-day experiences children have. Moreover, although sanctions and time limits are not imposed on the child portion of CalWORKs cash grants, the overall economic well-being of CalWORKs families is affected by the exhaustion of time limits and the reductions to cash grants that are made when parents fail to comply with Welfare-to-Work requirements.

Family Cap Policy: The Number of Children Born into Welfare Families Has Grown Since the Implementation of Welfare Reform

In 2003, 14 percent of the children in CalWORKs were born while their families were in CaWORKs, and half of these children were subject to the CalWORKs family cap policy, meaning that they were ineligible for cash aid because they were born ten months

after their parents were already in welfare.¹¹ In 1998, four percent of all CalWORKs children were born into welfare. The rate almost doubled to seven percent by 2003. These figures become more noteworthy when they are considered alongside the fact that the proportion of unaided children in the CalWORKs child population grew significantly after welfare reform. The proportion of unaided children increased from 8 percent to 14 percent between 1998 and 2003. Approximately half of these cash-ineligible children were subject to the family cap policy.

More Than One Out of Four Welfare Parents Who Were Exempted From Welfare-to-Work Requirements Were Exempted for an Average of Six Months in 2003

Roughly one-quarter (27 percent) of CalWORKs children who were in cases other than child-only cases and timed-out families had a parent or parents who were exempt from Welfare-to-Work requirements for at least one month during 2003. On average, when parents were exempted from Welfare-to-Work requirements, their exemptions lasted for six months during 2003. In December 2003, approximately 15 percent of one-parent or two-parent cases (not sanctioned) had an exempt parent.

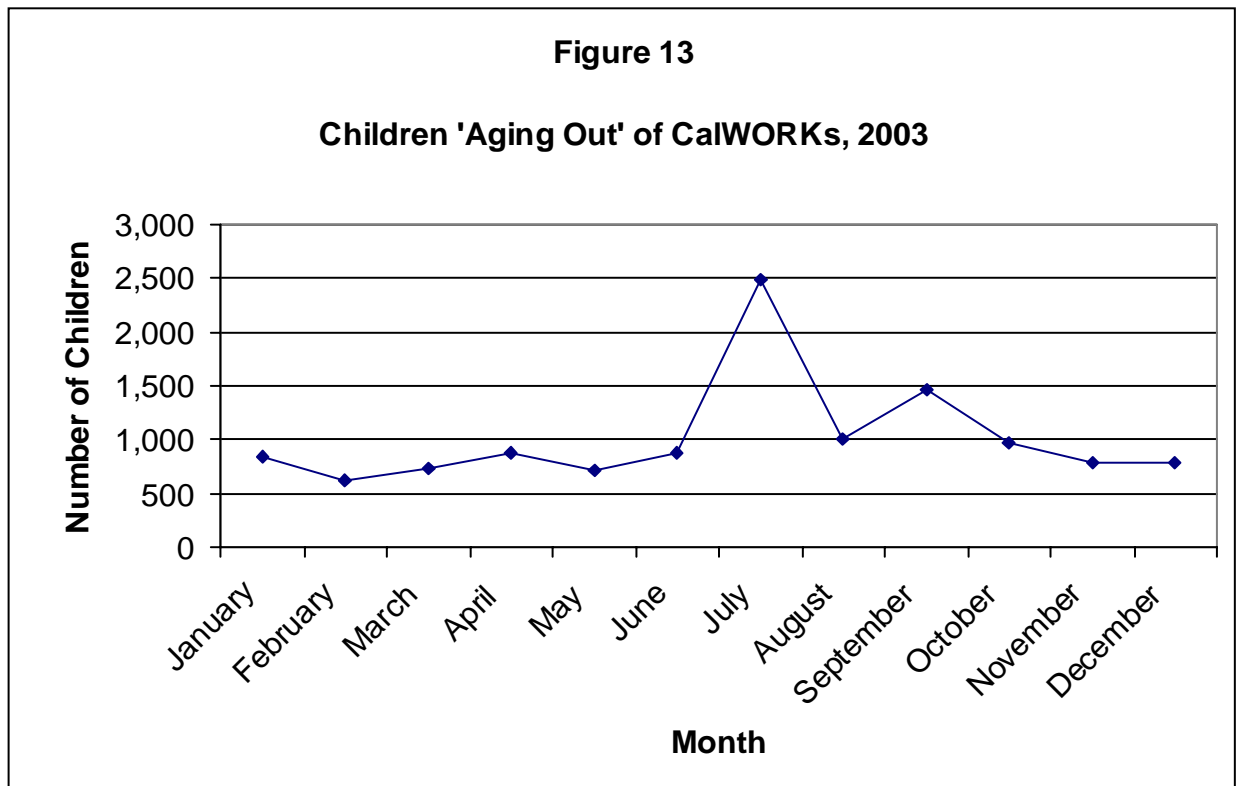
More Than 20 Percent of Aided Parents Were Sanctioned for at Least One Month

Slightly more than one-fifth of parents in cases other than child-only cases were in cases where the parent/relative caregiver was sanctioned for at least one month during 2003.¹² These cases represented 61,000 children. The average time in sanction status among these cases was four months.

The 'Aging Out' of CalWORKs Children

When CalWORKs children turn 18, they are no longer eligible for cash assistance.¹³ In this brief, the process of leaving aid as a result of turning 18 or 19 for full-time students is referred to as “aging out” of CalWORKs. In 2003, approximately 13,000 children aged out of CalWORKs in the County of Los Angeles. The average length of time the aged-out children spent in aid was almost five years. Three-quarters of the children who aged out in 2003 started aid before welfare reform, and

84 percent timed out of aid at the same time that they turned 18. Figure 13 plots the number of children aging out of CalWORKs each month in 2003. The data shows that, with the exception of the summer months when larger groups of children age out of welfare in connection with school graduation, an average of 800 children aged out per month in the County of Los Angeles.



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 2003.

Some Characteristics of 'Aged-Out' Children and Their Households

In 2003, the racial/ethnic composition in the aged-out CalWORKs child population was 46 percent Hispanic, 25 percent African-American, 15 percent Asian/Other, and 14 percent White. The data show that, relative to their proportion in the CalWORKs population, Asian and White children are aging out in much higher numbers than Hispanic children. English was the primary language spoken in 49 percent of the CalWORKs households with children living in them that aged out of aid in 2003. Spanish was spoken in just under one-third of these households (31 percent); seven percent spoke Armenian; six percent spoke Cambodian; four percent spoke Vietnamese. Similar to the data on ethnicity, the data on primary language show that children speaking in languages other than English and Spanish are aging out at higher rates relative to their proportion in CalWORKs. The data used on primary language here refer to the primary language spoken by the head of household and not the children. For analytical purposes, this report assumes that the primary language spoken by the head of household is also the primary language spoken by the children in the household.

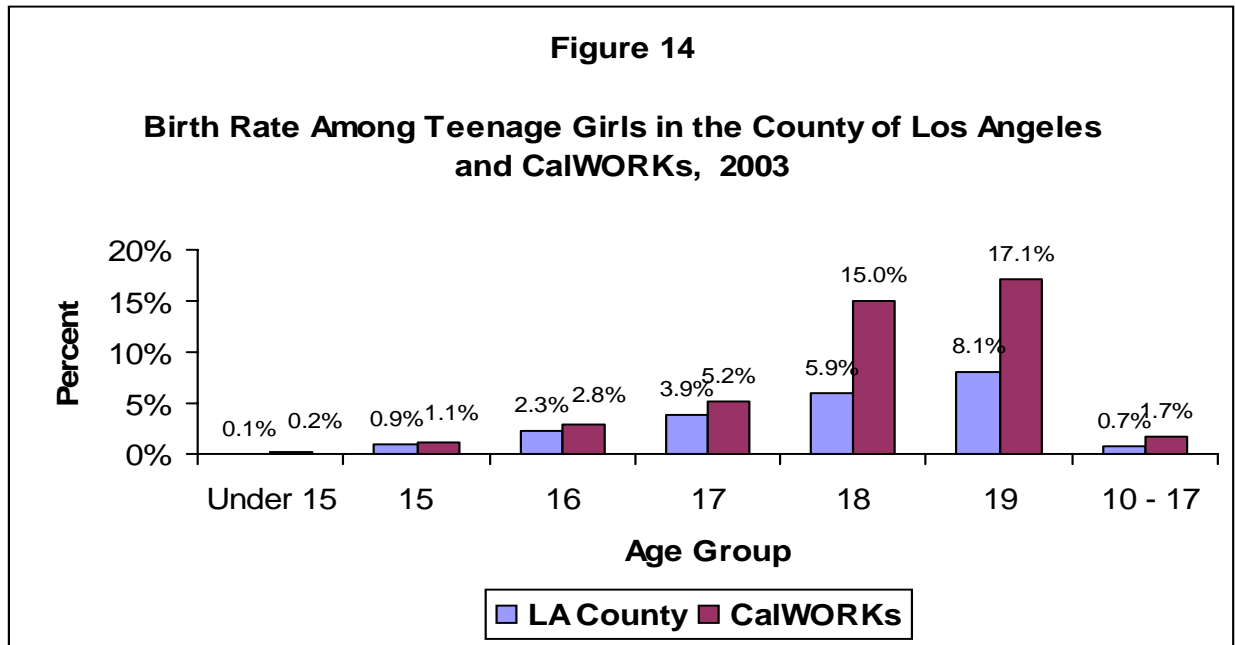
While 51 percent of CalWORKs children who aged out in 2003 lived in one-parent families, over one-third were child-only cases, and the remainder, which was 15 percent of the aged-out population, lived in two-parent families. The mean size of households with children that aged out in 2003 was 4.3 people: 1.6 adults and 2.7 children. In almost three-quarters (73 percent) of these households, the children who aged out had younger siblings that continued to receive aid.

IV. Issues Shaping the Long-Term Well-Being of CalWORKs Children

This section examines four areas that are crucial to the long-term well-being of the children studied in this report. 1) Teen births among CalWORKs children; 2) CalWORKs Children in the Schools of the County of Los Angeles; 3) Child Abuse; and 4) Health Insurance Coverage.

Teen Births in CalWORKs are More Prevalent Than Teen Births in the County as a Whole

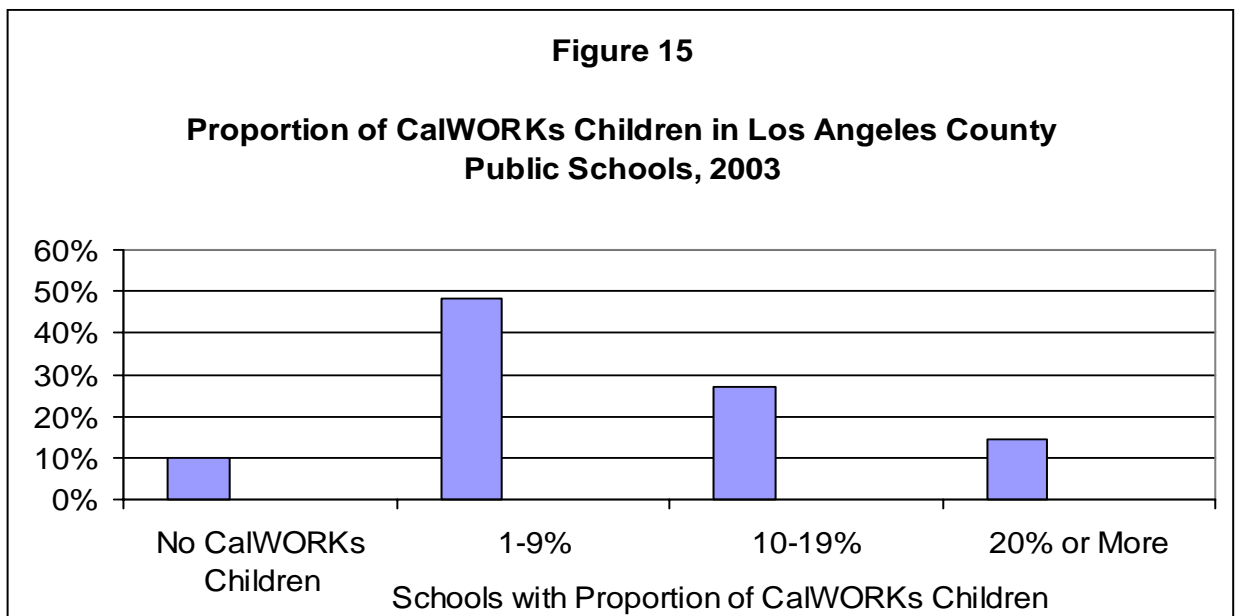
Figure 14 compares the birth rate among teenage girls in the County of Los Angeles with the birth rate among teenage girls in CalWORKs.¹⁴ In all age groups, the birth rate among CalWORKs teen girls is higher, and this is especially so among 18-year-old girls (who have a 15 percent birth rate within CalWORKs versus only a 6 percent birth rate in the County as a whole), and 19-year-old girls (who have a 17 percent birth rate within CalWORKs versus 8 percent in the County as a whole). It should be noted, however, that a substantial portion of the differences shown in the 18 and 19-year-old age brackets are definitional: Many 18 and 19-year-olds in CalWORKs are parents by definition; otherwise they would not be eligible for CalWORKs. A more realistic teen birth comparison is made by looking at 17-year-old girls (which is slightly more than 5 percent among CalWORKs versus 4 percent in the County as a whole).



Source: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 2003, California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Office of Health Information and Research, 2005

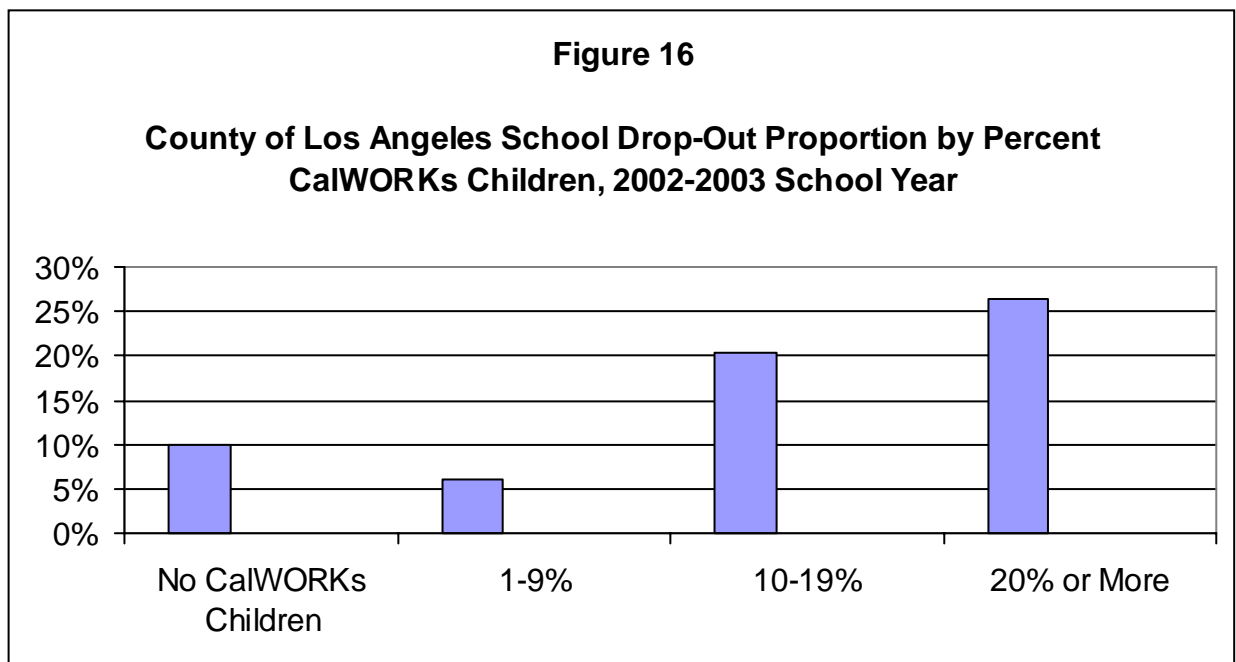
CalWORKs Children and Public Schools in the County of Los Angeles

Figure 15 shows the distribution of CalWORKs children in Los Angeles County public schools during 2003. Only 10 percent of these schools had no CalWORKs children in attendance. While close to half of these schools had student bodies comprised of between one and nine percent CalWORKs children, more than one-quarter (27 percent) had between 10 and 19 percent CalWORKs children, and 15 percent had 20 percent or more CalWORKs children.



Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System, 2003:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/demographics>

During 2002-2003, the drop-out rate for public high schools (K9-12) in the County of Los Angeles was 12 percent. One important issue is the likelihood that CalWORKs children will drop out from school. Dropping out will negatively affect the lives of these children when they become adults and are expected to enter the labor market. A brief of this limited scope cannot address this issue exhaustively. However, Figure 16 shows the 2003 drop-out rates for Los Angeles County public schools by the proportion of CalWORKs children within their student bodies. Schools with student bodies consisting of 20 percent or more CalWORKs children had the highest drop-out rates (26 percent). While schools with student bodies consisting of between 10 and 19 percent CalWORKs children had a 20 percent drop-out rate, schools with student bodies consisting of between one and nine percent CalWORKs children had a drop-out rate of 6 percent. Schools with no CalWORKs children enrolled in them had a drop-out rate of 10 percent.



Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System, 2003:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/demographics>

It should be emphasized here that these dropout statistics cannot be used as the basis for definitive conclusions about the likelihood that CalWORKs children will drop out of school. However, the statistics are suggestive and indicate that additional research should be done to explore how the County's CalWORKs children fare in school, and whether any additional programmatic supports are needed to help them obtain a basic education.

Child Abuse

One of the most crucial questions regarding the well-being of children in welfare families is the rate of child maltreatment. It is widely accepted in literature on poverty and child maltreatment that economically secure families are less likely to maltreat their children than families living under economic hardship.¹⁵ Since the majority of CalWORKs families live in poverty, the child maltreatment rates in these families can be expected to be higher. This study examines this issue by looking into the overlap between children on welfare and children who received Child Protective Services in the County of Los Angeles from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). At the national level, the rapid decline in welfare caseloads in recent years has not been accompanied by a similar

decline in the caseloads of children in Child Protective Services. The County of Los Angeles largely replicates the national trend. However, Table 1 shows that this trend in the County only became apparent after 2002, following a sharp decline in the DCFS caseload between 2000 and 2002. The active DCFS child protective caseload dropped by only 6.8 percent between 2002 and 2004, after dropping over 25 percent between 2000 and 2002. At the same time, the number of children in CalWORKs dropped by 14 percent between 2000 and 2002, and by 15 percent between 2002 and 2004. As a result of these trends, DCFS caseload and foster care rates per 1,000 children decreased at lower rates relative to the CalWORKs children rate per 1,000 children after 2002.

Table 1 Trends in Child Welfare Caseloads and Number of Children in Welfare, in the County of Los Angeles, 2003					
	January 2000	January 2002	October 2003	Percent Change 2000-2002	Percent Change 2002-2004
Children in Receipt of DCFS Services	59,000	44,000	41,000	-25.40%	-6.8%
Children in Foster Care	45,000	32,000	29,000	-28.9%	-9.4%
Children in CalWORKs	430,000	372,000	316,000	-13.5%	-15.1%
Number of Children in Receipt of DCFS Services per 1,000	22	15.9	14.7	-27.6%	-7.5%
Number of Children in Foster Care per 1,000	16.7	11.6	10.4	-31%	-10.1%
Number of Children in CalWORKs per 1,000	160	134.4	113.3	-16%	-15.7%
Child Population in the County	2,687,000	2,768,000	2,790,000		

Source: Compiled by Chief Administrative Office/Service Integration Branch/Research and Evaluation Services. Administrative Records used include: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 2003; and Caseload Records, Department of Child and Family Services, Los Angeles County, 2003.

The Research and Evaluation Services Unit has also compiled data that enables an examination of the extent to which the CalWORKs population uses Child Protective Services. The data are based on a match of administrative records received from DCFS and DPSS and cover a period of 15 months between January 2002 and March 2003. Administrative records from DCFS include all children who have received Child Protective Services, as well as information on their family members. DPSS administrative records include information on all children in families that receive CalWORKs.

The results of the match are summarized in Table 2. The active DCFS caseload for January 2002 was 44,000 and dropped to 42,000 by the end of the baseline period in March 2003. However, during this period 66,000 unique children received services from DCFS. The data set matched 30,000 of these DCFS clients to the CalWORKs population. Out of these 30,000 clients, 60 percent were children who received services from both agencies. The remaining 40 percent were not in CalWORKs but had a family member (sometimes another DCFS child) in welfare.¹⁶

Table 2 Welfare Children and Families Involved in Child Protective Services, in the County of Los Angeles, 2003			
Caseload Population	Unique Count January '02-March '03	January 2002	March 2003
DCFS Caseload	66,000	44,000	42,000
Children in Foster Care	46,000	32,000	30,000
CalWORKs Children	477,000	372,000	327,000
Matched Population			
CalWORKs Children in Receipt of DCFS Services	30,000		
CalWORKs Children in Foster Care	19,000		
Matched Population/DCFS Caseload¹⁷	45.50%		
Matched Population/DCFS Foster Care¹⁸	41.30%		
Matched DCFS Foster Care Children per 1,000 CalWORKs Children¹⁹	39.8		
Non-matched DCFS Foster Care Children per 1,000 non-CalWORKs Children²⁰	11.7		

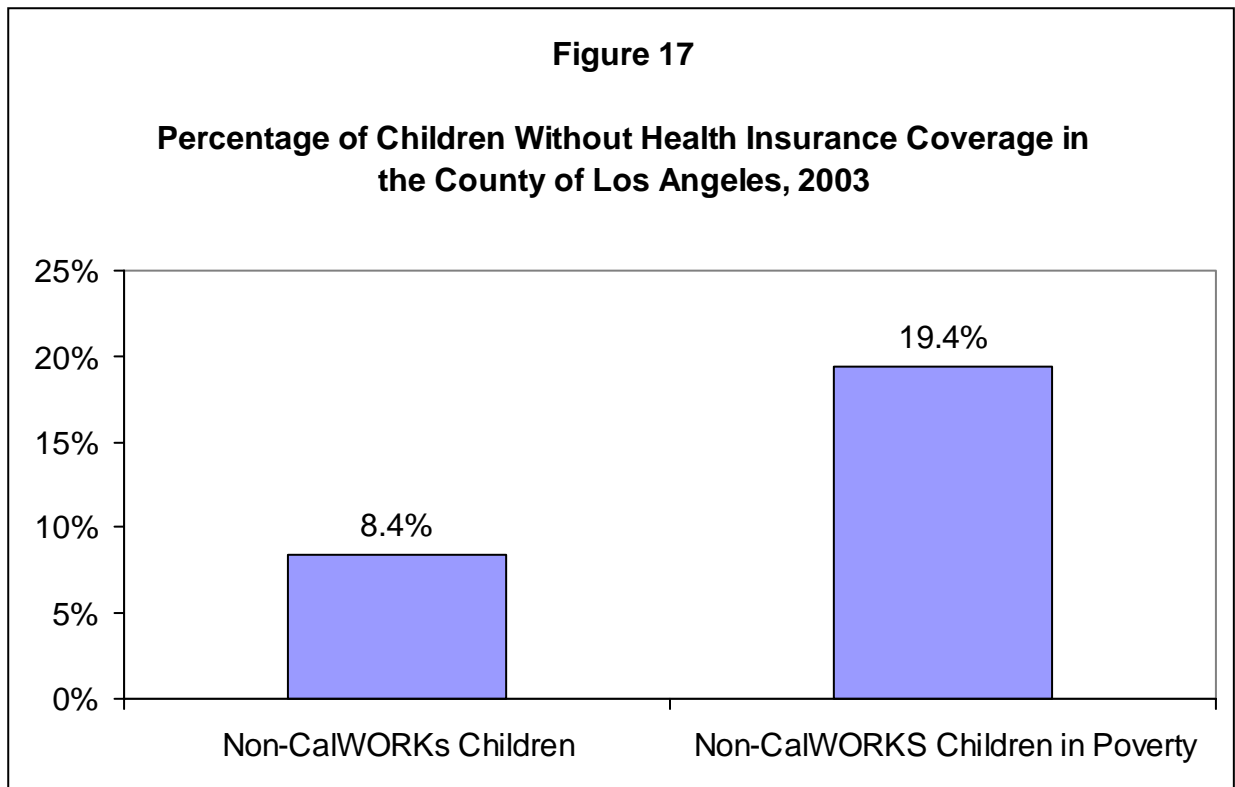
Source: Compiled by Chief Administrative Office/Service Integration Branch/Research and Evaluation Services. Administrative Records used include: Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Evaluation and Reporting (LEADER). Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County, 2003; and Caseload Records, Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles County, 2003.

The figures in Table 2 illustrate that almost half of the children receiving Child Protective Services also received CalWORKs services. Moreover, during the baseline period, this proportion increased from 41 percent to 55 percent for the entire caseload, and from 38 percent to 50 percent for children placed in foster care. In addition, Table 2 compares the foster care rates of CalWORKs and non-CalWORKs children. The data shows that, while almost 40 out of 1,000 children in CalWORKs were placed in foster care, this figure is roughly 12 out of 1,000 for children not in CalWORKs.

These figures clearly show the overlap between welfare participation and involvement in child maltreatment programs, and they point to the urgent need for an increased level of collaboration between the two agencies providing welfare services to children in the County.

Children in CalWORKs Automatically Receive Vital Health Insurance Coverage

Health insurance coverage is a critical issue to consider in connection with the long-term well-being of children because lack of adequate health insurance can be a crippling barrier to child growth and development. Moreover, uninsured families pose a problem with considerable economic costs. Children in CalWORKs families are eligible for the Medi-Cal health insurance program. All aided and unaided children are automatically covered by Medi-Cal. The importance of this coverage is seen in looking at recent data on health insurance coverage available from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). CHIS reveals that 7.4 percent of all children in the County of Los Angeles were uninsured in 2003.²¹ If an adjustment is made to this figure and CalWORKs children are removed from the total number of children, the result is that



Source: California Health Interview Survey. CHIS 2003 Public Use Files, February 2005.

8.4 percent of children in the County who were outside of CalWORKs were uninsured in 2003.

However, a more fair comparison is one between health insurance coverage of CalWORKs children and health insurance coverage of children who were in poverty but not in receipt of CalWORKs services. The CHIS shows that, among all children in poverty, 13 percent were uninsured in 2003.²² However, if non-CalWORKs children living in poverty are isolated by deducting their number from the total number of children in poverty, the result is that 19.4 percent of these non-CalWORKs children were uninsured in 2003.²³ (See Figure 17.) These findings show that CalWORKs provides critical access to health care for the majority of the children in poverty in the County of Los Angeles.

V. Conclusion

One of the chief objectives that has unified welfare programs historically, from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) era through the sweeping changes made with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), is the emphasis each of the programs has placed on the importance of protecting and nurturing children. The findings presented in this report on the growing proportion of cases in which adults do not receive CalWORKs cash assistance while their children are aided suggest a need to increase the programmatic emphasis on children even further in the future. When the Welfare-to-Work Act was passed in California, a great deal of attention was given to the process of facilitating the movement of parents from welfare to the labor market and on to self-sufficiency. However,

when time limits and sanctions are factored into the overall composition of CalWORKs families in the County of Los Angeles, it becomes clear that CalWORKs has evolved into a program that predominantly aids children. For this reason, policymakers may wish to consider further shifting some of the focus in CalWORKs from Welfare-to-Work for parents to more meaningful and adequate programs and services for children. The goal of such a shift would be to provide improved opportunities to this vulnerable segment of the population to become economically independent as adults.²⁴

The share of children born into welfare families and thus subject to family cap policies increased after the implementation of welfare reform. This is another issue that will require ongoing observation and careful consideration. Insofar as the share of these unaided children is growing, it will be necessary in the future to address the issue of whether the family cap is working as intended in terms of reducing birth rates and out-of-wedlock births in welfare families. At the same time, a stable number of CalWORKs children are aging out of the program. Demographic information on aged-out children is readily available and reported in these pages, but a comparatively negligible amount of systematic information is available at this time on key outcomes for aged-out children. Research that focuses on such outcomes in the future could provide further clues as to the effectiveness with which CalWORKs prepares children before they age out and the areas where changes and enhancements would potentially be helpful.²⁵

Findings from this report also indicate that additional policy measures might be taken within CalWORKs to deal with the problems of school drop outs and teen pregnancy. Findings in both areas are quite provisional

at present, but they thus far suggest that the rate of teen births among teen girls is higher in CalWORKs across all age groups when compared to the County as a whole. Moreover, school drop-out rates in the County of Los Angeles appear to increase as the percentage of CalWORKs students in the schools increase. These comparative differences are clearly more a function of poverty and unequal community development than a function of CalWORKs enrollment and participation. However, to the extent that CalWORKs is an aid program for the County's poor population, program administrators and stakeholders may wish to consider how the program can either directly assist participants with these issues or support and facilitate the assistance and prevention in these areas provided by other County departments, thereby integrating services in the process.

Dealing with the issue of child abuse provides an additional opportunity for the CalWORKs program to place increased emphasis on children and to coordinate services from separate County departments. Findings in this report indicate that half the children receiving Child Protective Services from DCFS also either receive CalWORKs services or their families are in welfare. Moreover, the rate of foster care placement among children in CalWORKs is much higher relative to those who have no welfare involvement. This raises the question of how the CalWORKs program may be able to assist in the prevention of child abuse and in the support given to victims of child abuse. A more thorough study of the relationship between welfare dependency and child abuse could potentially help answer these questions.

Although this report provides valuable information on the characteristics of the child population in CalWORKs, its limited scope prevents the analyses here from definitively

answering the question of how effectively the CalWORKs program meets the needs of children. To answer this question exhaustively, a detailed analysis would have to be conducted that looked at the extent to which CalWORKs assists in halting the processes through which poverty is passed on from one generation to the next. How well, in other words, does CalWORKs prepare young people for the first stages of adulthood and a life of self-sufficiency? While these questions cannot be fully answered here, this report has provided the beginnings of answers and pointed to areas where policymakers and stakeholders may wish to consider making programmatic interventions that will improve the way CalWORKs assists children in the future.

Endnotes

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all figures reported in this study are for 2003. This was done so that the numbers given here would be uniformly reported for the same year.

² Between 1998 and 2003, child poverty in the County of Los Angeles dropped by close to 10 percentage points, from 33 percent to 23.7 percent. By comparison, over the same period in the United States as a whole, child poverty dropped by two percent from 18.9 percent to 17.4 percent. The child poverty rate in the County of Los Angeles has therefore exceeded the rate for the nation as a whole over this six-year period, but the rate of decline has been steeper in the County than in the nation as a whole over the same period.

³ It is important to underscore here that the 496,000 children in CalWORKs families, as well as the 750,000 people in CalWORKs families during 2003, represents both those who are eligible for cash assistance and those who are ineligible for cash assistance/unaided.

⁴ With the exception of this report's analysis of health insurance coverage, the data sources used to make comparisons between the CalWORKs population and the County of Los Angeles as a whole did not allow for the removal of CalWORKs participants from the numbers and figures given for the County. In other words, the numbers given for the County of Los Angeles include CalWORKs participants. Consequently, the comparative proportions reported for the County of Los Angeles are artificially inflated or deflated to certain degrees, and the differences between the two populations are somewhat more pronounced on each measure than what this brief is able to report. Nevertheless, the proportions given for each population provide the reader with a fairly good understanding of the contours of each population in the various areas that are measured.

⁵ It should be noted here that, while certain ethnic/racial categories are not mutually exclusive, such as 'Hispanic' and 'African-American', they are treated as exclusive categories in this report because they are presented as exclusive categories when information on CalWORKs entrants is initially collected. Moreover, in checking the extent to which there are participants in both categories in CalWORKs data, RES found that the number is negligible.

⁶ Child-only cases are cases in which the child or children in the case are aided while the adult or adults are not aided. A CalWORKs case becomes a child-only case if, for example, the adult caregiver is sanctioned for not complying with Welfare-to-Work program requirements. Under these circumstances, the adult portion of the cash grant is cut, but the child portion of the grant remains intact. A CalWORKs case can also become a child-only case if adults are noncompliant with child support rules, or are ineligible non-citizens, or are Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment recipients. It should be noted that cases in which parents have reached time limits on cash assistance are also cases in which only the child/children are aided while the parents are not. However, these time-limited cases are considered separately from child-only cases in DPSS administrative records, and they are, therefore, considered separately from child-only cases in this part of this report's analysis as well. Moreover, sanctioned cases have been excluded in the calculations used to generate the 37 percent of cases that are reported as child-only cases for 2003. The reason for this is that child-only cases are presented here as an annual figure while sanctions are often cured in less than one year. Therefore, it did not make sense to include sanctioned cases as a component of child-only cases for 2003. Later in this report, when a monthly snapshot figure is presented for child-only cases, the definition of such cases is broadened and includes both timed-out and sanctioned cases.

⁷ For an additional evaluative and policy-driven analysis of the child-only case issue in several states, with particular focus on Trenton, New Jersey, see the following: Palla, Seri, Courtney J. Kakuska and Jeanette M. Herick. *Developing Strategies to Address the Child Only Caseload: Trenton, New Jersey*. Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network; Prepared for Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance, June 2003. Also see: Wood, Robert G. and Debra A. Strong. *Work First New Jersey Evaluation: The Status of Families on Child-Only TANF Cases*. Princeton, New Jersey: Mathematical Policy Research, Inc., May 2002.

⁸ See the following studies: Verma, Nandita and Richard Hendra. *Monitoring Outcomes for Los Angeles County's Pre- and Post-CalWORKs Leavers: How are they Fairing?* Prepared for Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2003; Moreno, Manuel, et al. *Study of Sanctions Among CalWORKs Participants in the County of Los Angeles: Who, When and Why?* Prepared for the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services. Chief Administrative Office/Service Integration Branch/Research and Evaluation Services, 2005.

⁹ In order to analyze pre-reform and post-reform children in CalWORKs, RES looked at all children enrolled for at least one month in CalWORKs during 2003. These children were then broken down into two groups: (a) those who had been in CalWORKs since before welfare reform was implemented in the state of California in 1998, and (b) those who were enrolled in CalWORKs only after the implementation of welfare reform in 1998.

¹⁰ It should be noted that Figure 12 includes cases that were still open. In addition, the 48 percent of the CalWORKs child population in 2003 that is reported here as having had cases dating back to the pre-reform era did not all necessarily receive aid continuously since the pre-reform era.

¹¹ The Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule states that the CalWORKs grant will not increase for any child born into a family that has received CalWORKs *continuously* for ten months prior to the birth of the child, unless there was at least a two-month break during the period. However, the MFG child is considered a CalWORKs recipient and is eligible for CalWORKs-related benefits.

¹² Note that child-only cases are not subject to sanctions and are therefore left out of this calculation.

¹³ An exception to this rule is made if children have not graduated from school by the time they turn 18, in which case they can continue to receive aid until graduation but for no longer than an additional year.

¹⁴ Birth rates for each age bracket represented in Figure 14 are calculated by dividing *the live births* within the age brackets in CalWORKs and Los Angeles County by *all the girls* in the given age brackets in CalWORKs and Los Angeles County, and then multiplying the quotient for each (CalWORKs and Los Angeles County) by 100.

¹⁵ For further research on the relationship between child maltreatment and both poverty and welfare participation, see the following: Courtney, Mark, Irving Piliavin, A. Dworsky, and A. Zinn. "Involvement of TANF Families with Child Welfare Services." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management: Washington, D.C., 2001; Geen, Rob, Lynn Fender, Jacob Leos-Urbel and Teresa Markowitz. "Welfare Reform's Effect on Child Welfare Caseloads. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2001; Geen, Rob, K. Kortenkamp, and Matt Stagner. "Foster Care Experiences of Long-Term Welfare Recipients in California." Washington D.C. Urban Institute, 2002; Shook, Kristen. "Does the Loss of Welfare Income Increase the Risk of Involvement with the Child Welfare System?" In, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 21 (9/10), pp 781-814, 1999; Waldfogel, Jane. "Welfare Reform and the Child Welfare System." Paper prepared for the Joint Center for Poverty Research Conference on Child Welfare Services Research and Its Policy Implications: Washington D.C.: 2003.

¹⁶ The time spent in CalWORKs here may be either before or after receiving Child Protective Services or placement in foster care during the same year.

¹⁷ This row shows the ratio of CalWORKs children in receipt of DCFS services to all children in receipt of DCFS services.

¹⁸ This row shows the ratio of CalWORKs children in foster care to all children in foster care.

¹⁹ This row shows the number of CalWORKs children in foster care per 1,000 CalWORKs children.

²⁰ This row shows the number of non-CalWORKs children in foster care per 1,000 non-CalWORKs children.

²¹ California Health Interview Survey. CHIS 2003 Public Use Files, February 2005.

²² California Health Interview Survey. CHIS 2003 Public Use Files, February 2005.

²³ The data shows that 67 percent of all children in CalWORKs lived below 100 percent of the Poverty Threshold in 2003.

²⁴ Along similar lines, it should be pointed out that the high percentage of single-parent CalWORKs cases in 2003 suggests the need to ensure that the collection of child support from absent parents is effectively enforced.

²⁵ Regardless of whether such research is carried out in the near future, however, policymakers may wish to consider implementing measures that would lead to a smoother transition for aged-out children into the labor force. Such measures might include additional education and training that would help these aged-out children become economically independent.